

Contribution of Tom Mboya Airlift Africa to Kenya's Post-Independence National Security Strategy

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Abstract

The 1959-1963 East African Students Airlifts, initiated by the politician Thomas Joseph Mboya, was a significant independence strategy. Tom Mboya Airlift Africa (TMAA) targeted the human capital development of Kenya's leadership cadre at the dawn of independence. The strategic environment in Kenya, then, comprised uncertainties and complexities characterised by the Cold War era and the lack of adequate critical human capital to replace the outgoing British colonial expatriates amidst an intense desire for Africanisation. The impending departure of the imperialists, who had principally administered the colony, presented a major security threat to the nation's political and socio-economic stability. Consequently, TMAA provided the Kenyan nation with scholarship opportunities that enabled its students to pursue advanced education in the United States of America (USA). While evaluating TMAA in the context of safeguarding Kenya's economic security interests, this paper construes national security within the 1994 Human Development Report which broadens its definition from state-centred to people-centred, hence human security. The study, therefore, aimed at evaluating the benefits that accrued from TMAA in relation to mitigating the economic and political threats to Kenya's national security on the eve of independence. The research integrated historical analysis with a case study of TMAA. Primary data was collected through interviews with TMAA beneficiaries, historians and national security experts and complemented with a review of literature. The paper argues that TMAA transcended its educational mission to become an integral element of Kenya's national security strategy, highlighting the strategic role of human capital investment in safeguarding national security interests through the development of a new generation of leaders. The findings, therefore, illuminate TMAA's role in national security strategy development, and emphasise its vital contribution to establishing a robust government infrastructure and enriching the discourse on statecraft during Kenya's transition to independence.

Keywords: Tom Mboya Airlift Africa, national security strategy

Introduction

The dawn of Kenya's independence, between 1959 and 1963, presented the need to focus on securing the country's national interests as soon as the British colonialists handed over power to the national leaders. The 1960-1963 Lancaster House negotiations were a clear prediction that self-rule was imminent, hence the need for Kenya to put in place appropriate national security strategies to protect its sovereignty. In the wake of colonialism, Kenya confronted a Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous (VUCA) reality (Yarger, 2008). While the volatility was in the heightened agitation for independence following the Mau Mau uprising (1952-60), the outcomes of the Lancaster House negotiations presented the uncertainties. The complexity was in governing the country with 80% illiteracy rate among the populace as the expatriates exited. Consequently, the road map to independence remained ambiguous. It is in this context that the Kenyan politician, Thomas Joseph Mboya, conceived African students' airlift programme, popularly known as Tom Mboya Airlift Africa (TMAA). This was a crucial initiative meant to address the critical gaps in Kenya's human capital development, whose impact on economic security at the dawn of independence could have been devastating. The beneficiaries of TMAA included, among others, Barack Obama Sr, Amb. Pamela Odede Mboya, Amb. Michael Okeyo Owuor, Hon. Simon Thuo Kairo, Prof. Washington Aggrey Okumu, Prof. Wangari Maathai, Hon. Maina Wanjigi, Prof. Maina wa Kinyatti, and Hon. Arthur Magugu. Others were Prof. George Saitoti, Hon. Ochola Ogaye Mak'Anyengo, Hon. Wilson Ndolo Ayah, Dr. Ng'endo Mwangi, Prof. Reuben Olembo, Rev. Daniel Mbai and Amb. Philip Gichuru Gitonga.

The post-colonial era succeeding TMAA presents a compelling backdrop to understanding the implications of education scholarships on national security. This was a transformative time for nations shaking off the chains of colonisation as they navigated the complex journey of nationhood. A recurring challenge faced by many was the acute shortage of skilled human resources, a hurdle that often hindered their developmental aspirations. In its quest for post-colonial identity, Africa found its development aspirations curtailed by this very deficit (Ogot, 2020). The continent, brimming with enthusiasm for progress, was hamstrung by the lack of professionals and this compounded the overarching narrative of national security.

The African nations, freshly emancipated from decades of external control, grappled with the challenges of statecraft and nation-building. Among these was the palpable absence of a qualified indigenous leadership cadre and human resource capital. This was a direct repercussion of the colonial regimes' strategies that often suppressed local human capital development by hindering access quality education (Burton, 2020). Kenya, akin to its African peers, confronted its

own unique challenges. With vast untapped potential, the nation urgently laid strategies towards developing an enlightened leadership capable of guiding the country towards sustainable development in order to assert its stance in international arena, and fortify its domestic institutions. Recognising these national security challenges, TMAA initiative emerged as a critical intervention.

It is important to reflect that Kenya's walk to independence was punctuated with significant milestones. Events like the *Mau Mau* uprising and the Lancaster House conferences, culminating in the eventual lowering of the Union Jack, became emblematic of the nation's resilience and determination (Maxon, 2023). However, after breaking free from colonial chains, Kenya was confronted with the challenge of uniting its diverse ethnic, cultural, and socio-economic strengths into a singular, progressive force. The legacy of limited access to higher education under British rule exacerbated this issue, thus presenting a national security challenge. As independence neared, there was a discernible void in human resource capable of safeguarding and promoting economic prosperity, a vital national security interest and a fundamental element for a nascent nation (Ogot, 2020). Tom Mboya's Pan-African spirit and keen insight into Kenya's socio-political fabric, coupled with his awareness of international political currents, inspired him to launch TMAA to bridge the gap. Ostensibly, the programme aimed to offer Kenyan students the opportunity for higher education in the West (Stephens, 2013). Mboya anticipated that the rise of Kenya, both regionally and globally, would require a cohort of erudite, globally conscious leaders adept at intergrating international standards with indigenous insights to safeguard the hard fought for independence.

The airlifts initiative was not devised in a vacuum. The late 1950s and 1960s marked an era when the machinations of the Cold War were redrawing global allegiances. With Africa's newly minted sovereign states, the continent became a hotbed for an ideological tug-of-war between the West and the East (Gleijeses, 2021). Against this backdrop, Mboya's choice to predominantly send students to the United States was a deliberate strategic move (Burton, 2020). This decision was about charting a specific course for Kenya's VUCA situation, through the use of diplomacy to get foreign scholarships to align the country with select global allies, and make a definitive statement about the nation's intended direction.

In essence, TMAA was a piece in the larger jigsaw puzzle, an integral component of Kenya's larger post-independence vision. It was an embodiment of the nation's aspirations, its commitment to its youth, and its intent to play a meaningful role on the global stage. This initiative served as a vantage point to comprehend the complex tapestry of Kenya's aspirations, obstacles, and blueprint for its post-independence future.

Despite scholarly attention to the educational and philanthropic outcomes of TMAA, scant research has explored its strategic significance in shaping Kenya's national security within the context of human security. This gap in literature becomes increasingly relevant given Kenya's continued reliance on foreign scholarships as an integral component of human resource development. Historical incidents, such as the 1963 Bulgarian Scholarship scam and the 2023 Finland's Tampere City University scholarship scam under the Uasin Gishu County Government, Kenya, highlight potential human security dilemmas associated with foreign scholarship programmes. This raises pertinent questions regarding their alignment with national security objectives.

This study therefore seeks to examine the role of TMAA in Kenya's national security strategy from its inception to the promulgation of the new constitution in 2010. Referencing the UNDP Human Development Report of 1994, the research aims to elucidate the programme's impact on Kenya's political and economic security during post-independence era. Furthermore, it endeavours to extract actionable lessons from the airlifts to strengthen Kenya's pursuit of national security interests through future scholarship initiatives.

Literature review

The connection between national security and education has emerged as a focal point of academic inquiry, gaining particular prominence within the developmental narratives of emerging states. Historically, conceptualised within the narrow confines of military capacity and territorial defence, national security has undergone a paradigm shift (Kitler & Jaskólski, 2021). Scholars such as Buzan (2020) advocate for a broader interpretation, considering a contemporary view that aligns national security with socio-economic strength and political stability, making the case for human capital development as a strategic imperative.

■ **National Security, Human Security and Mboya's Sessional Paper No 10**

The contemporary understanding of national security as human security is conceptualised on the basis of the changing nature of sovereignty that transcends the protection of borders to accommodate responsibility for the wellbeing of the population. Within this definition, a nation is only secure when its population is feeling well. This thinking situates national security as a fundamental aspect of a nation's development aspirations, which include freedom from fear, want and indignity (Tadjbakhsh, 2006; Lamb, 2023). The concept underscores the need to build a society that offers openings for each person to cultivate and accomplish their potential. It is rooted in the Human Development Report of 1994 which underlines the seven elements of human security as economic security (stable basic income); food security (access to basic food); health security (dignified

healthcare), environmental security (protection from environmental disasters and threats), personal security (protection from crime and violence), community security (protection from violence and instability in community), and political security (protection from government repression, human rights abuses, threats and violence by non-state groups and negative actions on wellbeing) (Lamb, 2023). The UNDP (2022) Special Report has further amplified the human security challenges impacting the Anthropocene to include pandemics, geopolitical realignments, digital divide and climate change. In the 21st Century, these threats are domiciled in the global health threats, global digital threats, global inequality threats, climate threats and geopolitical threats (Lamb, 2023). The thoughts are aligned to Tom Mboya's Sessional Paper No (SP 10) of 1965 on "African socialism and its application to planning in Kenya" (Republic of Kenya, 1965). This policy direction focused on promotion of political equity, social justice, human dignity, freedom from want, diseases and exploitation, equal opportunities, high and growing income per capita, as well as equitable distribution of resources and services as crucial for the economic and political security of post independent Kenya (Republic of Kenya, 1965; Mwangagi, 2021). Mboya underscored the role of the state as an extension of the traditional African socialism spirit of mutual social responsibility. This includes ensuring that all citizens enjoy equal opportunities free from corruption and prejudice, and are offered vital public goods such as education, health care and social protection (Republic of Kenya, 1965). While Mboya's ideas at the dawn of Kenya's independence largely realign with the 21st Century national security discourse, research is yet to unravel how the TMAA initiative helped to implement the human security blueprint for a post-independent Kenya. This study intends to examine the contribution of TMAA to economic security, political security and foreign policy as fundamental aspects of national security strategies in post-independent Kenya.

■ ***TMAA and National Security Strategy***

In the realm of statecraft, 'strategy' is often referred to as the art of planning and directing overall military operations and movements in a war or battle (Rousseau, 2012). However, the term has transcended its military origins to be adopted across various filed. It now encompasses a set of choices and decisions made to allocate resources and navigate complex environments to achieve specific objectives. A national security strategy (NSS) is the overarching framework through which a nation specifies its national security interests that must be safeguarded or advanced, how they are threatened, and how to minimize the risks and threats to ensure its continued existence. Ranasinghe (2019) underscores that, as an instrument, it has the ability to scan for discernible activities of potential actors (internal, external and non-state) that have the capacity to influence (openly or covertly) the national interests and fundamentals of a country's sovereignty.

In particular, it should be capable of addressing political and economic stability, national morale and solidarity, foreign relations and military prowess, as well as energy and the environment. NSS therefore entails the convergence of ways and means to achieving specific ends that are capable of advancing or safeguarding national interests. Its role is to improve the policy direction from an adverse state of affairs to a more favorable position while broadly guiding and organising the entire spectrum or just a specific situation. The focus is on seeking competitive advantage over adversaries in order to successfully counter hostile action (Heffington et al., 2021).

TMAA is a prime example of education being leveraged as a component of a nation's security strategy. The SP10 of 1965 identifies the acute need for an educated leadership cadre as a pressing concern for post-independent Kenya. In the Paper, Mboya underscores education as a economic rather than a social service and the primary means of meeting manpower deficit and bridging economic gaps. He recognised the role of education in accelerating Africanisation and preservation of human dignity and freedom (Republic of Kenya, 1965). Burton (2020), in particular, underscores the deliberate sidelining of indigenous populations from higher education during the colonial era, leading to a glaring leadership void. The need for an educated leadership cadre in post-colonial Kenya emerges as a dominant theme across various studies. Contributions by Ngeno et al. (2020) shed light on colonial policies that limited educational opportunities for Kenyans, thereby creating a noticeable leadership gap during a crucial period.

The strategic undertones of TMAA as a foreign policy game plan, set against the backdrop of the Cold War, are crucial in understanding the broader geopolitical objectives of post-colonial Kenya. Gleijeses (2021) paints a vivid picture of the East-West ideological divide, portraying newly independent African nations as crucial chess pieces in a global standoff. Within this discourse, Munene (2017) posits that by steering the students' airlifts towards Western institutions, Mboya was not only seeking educational excellence but also making an overt strategic foreign policy statement. Moreover, it is worth noting that the United States, recognising the significance of these educational initiatives, seized the opportunity to further their geopolitical interests in the region, thus positioning themselves favourably in the broader Cold War context. Tom Mboya's imprint on Kenyan history is an enduring point of discussion among scholars. While his contributions as a visionary leader and trade unionist are widely recognised (Ogot, 2020), debates swirl around the strategic implications of the airlift initiative. Stephens (2013) considers it a carefully crafted strategy for Kenya's budding future. However, a contrary perspective suggests Mboya's intent was more about cementing ties with the West during an era marked by profound ideological rifts globally (Odari, 2011).

Mboya's clear Western orientation arguably directed Kenya on a specific ideological path, constraining its options for a more diversified or non-aligned foreign policy approach. This inclination gains clarity when juxtaposed with the stance of internal divisions, mirroring the larger geopolitical divides characteristic of the Cold War era (Odari, 2011). This further defined the ensuing dilemmas of securing a young independent nation.

In post-colonial African contexts, the link between education and national strategy is drawing increased scholarly attention. As Campbell (2021) highlights, higher education significantly influences the political, social, and economic trajectories of emerging nations. Beyond mere dissemination of knowledge, education plays a crucial role in shaping diplomatic ties, promoting national unity, and driving sustainable growth. Marginson (2006) believes that education shapes a nation's consciousness, cultivating an informed citizenry equipped to engage with pressing socio-political challenges. Pan (2011) further notes that access to quality education directly strengthens national security. An educated population can effectively navigate complex challenges, resist undue external influences, and create an environment conducive to stable governance and economic prosperity. This study endeavors to illuminate the interconnection between education and national security strategy. Central to our inquiry is the TMAA initiative, whose strategic outcomes and contribution to Kenya's national security aspirations, are evaluated.

Theoretical framework

The study was anchored in the chaos theory, developed from the 1960's works of meteorologist Edward Lorenz, and complexity theory, derived from the 1980's idea of complex adaptive systems by Murray Gell-Mann, John Holland, Stuart Kauffman, Ilya Prigogine, and Brian Goodwin of The Santa Fe Institute (SFI). On chaos, Lorenz's study of 'unstable aperiodic behaviour in deterministic nonlinear dynamical systems' discovered that based on differential equations, a very small change at the initial conditions can lead to massive changes in weather predictions over time (Valle Jr, 2000). Chaotic systems change over time, do not repeat themselves, are complex, sensitive to initial conditions and iterated. Systems display chaotic or non-chaotic behaviours depending on control parameters. Kenya's political and economic environment on the eve of independence was evidently changing as the colonialists prepared to hand over power. This made the country unstable, and unpredictable. Any little alteration at the initial stages of post-independent Kenya was therefore capable of producing major systemic impacts in the future. TMAA was one such control parameter introduced in the initial stages to prevent aperiodicity and instability in the country's national security systems. The current article intends to interrogate its impact.

A complex system is closely related to chaotic systems but it has a number of self-regulating components that keep on interacting and automatically re-engineering themselves into more complicated structures over time. Its components are the same but isolated; they persistently interact with other components in order to allow for system re-engineering; they auto-regulate to survive; they adhere to their own commands; and increasingly graduate to new levels of sophistication. The system oscillates between order, chaos, and sophistication depending on the regulatory frameworks in place (Valle, 2000). Within this framework, Mboya understood the complexity of Kenya's political and economic situation around independence, not just from the Lancaster House Constitutional negotiation conferences in which he participated but also from the racial tensions among the white settlers who wanted to turn Kenya into a white man's country, the Asian professionals and commercial entrepreneurs, and the Africans who were dispossessed of their land. The situation was further getting more sophisticated with the geopolitics of Cold War and the rivalry and radicalism of Jaramogi Oginga Odinga, an outstanding African leader. All these denoted continuity, confusion and complications alike. TMAA was therefore construed as a regulatory framework that would bring forth a new crop of leaders that would help manage the complexity.

Applying these theories, the research underscores how various government stakeholders, educational institutions, international allies, and students interrelated and influenced the trajectory of the airlifts. Through these theories, the study offers a deeper understanding of the evolving nature of the airlifts, allowing for the identification of patterns and dynamics that might otherwise remain unnoticed. It highlights the adaptability of the programme in the face of domestic challenges and global geopolitical changes.

Methodology

To assess the influence of TMAA on Kenya's post-independence national security strategy, the study anchored itself in both case study and historical research methodologies. This dual approach facilitated an in-depth examination of the Airlift's specific incidents while contextualising them within the larger socio-political and historical landscape of the era. The study was guided by an interpretivist paradigm. Central to the data collection were primary sources, specifically interviews and government archives. These granted invaluable first-hand insights into the considerations, intentions, and strategies of the principal figures who were engaged in, or were impacted by the TMAA initiative.

To reinforce and contextualise the primary findings, a comprehensive review of secondary data was undertaken. This involved critically analysing scholarly articles, books, and academic reports, providing broader viewpoints on the

airlift's contemporary perceptions and its subsequent historical interpretations. A purposive sampling method was employed, focusing on specific events, correspondences, and decisions linked to TMAA. This ensured that the study engaged with the most relevant and diverse sources that could shed light on the strategic essence of the initiative.

The analysis phase was characterised by a thematic approach. Data was systematically categorised and synthesised, unveiling patterns and correlations. This methodology enabled the drawing of coherent connections between the airlift initiative and its overarching implications on Kenya's national security, diplomatic relations, and developmental aspirations in the post-colonial phase.

Findings

In relation to the analysis of the TMAA initiative and its implications on Kenya's post-independence national security strategy, the research has identified several crucial findings. These insights, delineated below, significantly contribute to the understanding of the influence of the airlift on Kenya's national security and stability.

■ *Contribution to political security*

TMAA beneficiaries contributed their expertise in neutralising the chaos that ensued in Kenya's post-independent multiparty political environment as the struggle between East and West geopolitical alignments intensified. In the SP10 of 1965, President Kenyatta underscored the need for a political atmosphere that would breed trust and assurance in the new Republic. To this end, he directed that political security be guaranteed on the basis of democratic African socialism as outlined in the Kenya African National Union (KANU) political manifesto with positive non-alignment to both Western capitalism and Eastern communism. Nevertheless, on their return, the beneficiaries, equipped with insights from Western political practices, integrated them within the Kenyan context to serve the divergent political interests. The fusion was instrumental in crafting a political orientation that blended into the Cold War theatrics and the opposing political aspirations of President Jomo Kenyatta and his East-leaning Vice- President, Jaramogi Oginga Odinga. In particular, the right wing beneficiaries such as Hon. Arthur Magugu joined the KANU party, serving Githunguri Constituency intermittently as a Member of Parliament from 1969-2007. Dr. Zachary Onyonka, famous for winning elections while in prison, also joined KANU at 27 years of age. He served as Cabinet Minister in various capacities between 1969-1996 and as Member of Parliament for Kitutu West Constituency, retaining his parliamentary seat until his death. Similarly, Hon. Ndolo Ayah assumed various political capacities sporadically from 1969 before retiring in 1997. Prof. George Saitoti joined KANU in 1983 and rose to become Kenya's sixth

Vice President. Hon. James Maina Wanjigi became Member of Parliament for Kamkunji Constituency for 25 years while Hon. Simon Thuo Kairo became MP for Nakuru East Constituency.

The left wing beneficiaries, on the other hand, joined the opposition. For instance, Ochola MakAnyengo continued his trade union politics to become the Secretary-General of the Kenya African Workers Union, Vice-President of the Africa Chapter of the International Federation of Petroleum Workers, Secretary-General of Railways and Harbors Union and the Assistant Secretary General of the All Africa Trade Union Federation. He was a founding member of the Kenya People's Union (KPU) under the leadership of the East-leaning Jaramogi Oginga Odinga. KPU projected itself as a radical left wing opposition party that voiced concerns on corruption in government and the increasing Western influence in the country. Similarly, Prof. Maina wa Kinyati became a left leaning Marxist and critic of President Daniel Arap Moi's regime leading to his political imprisonment for six and half years. Prof. Wangari Maathai equally rose to become a renown political activist, serving as a Member of Parliament for Tetu Constituency (2002-2007). She founded the Greenbelt Movement in 1977, which organised protests against the planned construction of Kenya Times Media Trust Complex and a statue of President Moi at Uhuru Park, Nairobi, forcing foreign investors cancel the project in 1990. Barrack Obama Snr equally became a critic of government economic policies, was branded a regime troublemaker and reprimanded by President Jomo Kenyatta.

The seamless integration into these political roles fortified continuity and stability, thus fashioning a political structure imbued with both international standards and local ethos. Therefore, TMAA contributed to re-defining the political security landscape of post-independent Kenya within the East-West geopolitical dichotomy. Through TMAA the right wing and West-leaning beneficiaries such as George Saitoti, Ndolo Ayah, Zachary Onyonka, Maina Wanjigi, Simon Thuo, and Arthur Magugu were able to take charge of political economy as the East-leaning and left wing luminaries led by Ochola MakAnyengo, Maina Wa Kinyati, Wangari Maathai and Barack Obama Snr, respectively, provided the alternative voice that refocused Kenyan leaders on delivering on the post-independence aspirations while maintaining a non-aligned geopolitical stance. In the SP10 of 1965, Mboya underlined the right of every mature member of the Kenyan society, under the spirit of African socialism, to belong to any political party and demand equal political rights without restriction and discrimination and the obligation of the party to accommodate different points of view, regardless of an individual's economic power (Republic of Kenya, 1965). Importantly, the beneficiaries assumed prominent political roles within the government, filling the leadership vacuum left by the departing colonial administration and stabilising the political security

architecture of the nation (Stephens, 2013). As one of the beneficiaries noted:

Our exposure to Western democratic principles gave us a new perspective on governance, which we adapted to fit the Kenyan context.

The perspectives strengthened the non-alignment political aspirations of Kenya's democratic African socialism blueprint. They underscore the import of trade union and multiparty politics that has continued to safeguard the Kenya's political environment.

■ **Contribution to economic security**

The post-independence Kenya underwent significant economic changes with TMAA beneficiaries playing a crucial role in securing Kenya's economic wellbeing. Their education in Western institutions equipped them with a grasp of modern economic theories and strategies which made them occupy leadership roles in shaping the country's economic strategies, particularly SP10 of 1965 on eradication of poverty, disease and ignorance. Their contribution to Kenya's economic policies is underscored in their leadership in the various sectors where they were deployed. Prof. George Saitoti and Authur Magugu rose in politics to head the Ministry of Finance. Saitoti also led the African Group of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund and chaired the Boards of Rift Valley Institute of Science and Technology, Kenya Commercial Bank and Mumias Sugar Company. Ndolo Ayah became the Minister for Research and Technology and the Chairman of Safaricom, molding the firm from a startup to East Africa's largest company. Dr. Zachary Onyonka headed the ministries of education, economic planning, development and trade while Hon. Simon Thuo Kairo served as Assistant Minister for Labour. Dr. Ngendo Mwangi, Kenya's first woman physician, returned to set up clinics in Athi River and Sultan Hamud. She was the only doctor then, for about half a million people. Mak'Anyengo also served in the Ministry of Labour Advisory Board in 1963, overseeing the establishment of the National Social Security Fund.

Hon. Maina Wanjigi led the ministries of agriculture, public works, tourism and cooperative development. He initiated and developed Gikomba open air market, the Jua Kali business sector and settled the landless as Director of Settlements. Prof. Wangari Maathai served as the Chair of the Environment Liaison Centre which promoted the establishment of United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). She later on founded the Greenbelt Movement and rose to become an Assistant Minister for Environment and Natural Resources in the government of President Mwai Kibaki during which time she became the first African female to win a Nobel prize in environmental protection. Prof. Leah Marangu rose to become East Africa's first full woman professor and first woman Vice-Chancellor at African Nazarene University between 1997 and 2017. She also served in the Commission for University Education (CUE), National Council of Science and Technology, Egerton

University Council, Kenya Bureau of Standards, Kenya Institute of Education and at the Institute of Policy Analysis and Research, among others. Prof. Miriam Were, a public health advocate, led Moi University as a Chancellor and the National Aids Control Council, Kenya as Chairperson. She also chairs the African Medical and Research Foundation (AMREF) Board and is currently a member of the Lancet Covid-19 Commission. Upon his return, Prof. Reuben Olembo remained the longest serving member of the Board of Trustees of the Kenya National Parks, the bedrock of Kenya's tourism industry, having been appointed in 1967. He also mobilised resources for the establishment of the Harambee Institute of Technology for Western Province, which later rose to become the Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology. He was a government advisor to the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources. His environmental blueprint led to the establishment of National Environmental Management Authority (NEMA), Kenya. He also served as a managing trustee of the Kenya National Environment Trust Fund, a member of the Board of Directors of the Kenya Seed Company, and the Secretary of Kenya Academy of Sciences. Rev. Daniel Mbai joined Thogoto Teacher's College as a lecturer and contributed to teacher training education for a period of 30 years.

The beneficiaries' deep connection to Kenya's socio-cultural background made them particularly attuned to the nation's distinct economic challenges. This dual perspective enabled them to formulate policies that aligned with global standards, yet were tailored to Kenya's specific context, particularly SP10 of 1965. They returned with apt skills and knowledge in various fields, which they utilised in economic activities. Due to the emergence of skilled human capital, production activities increased, thereby improving economic growth and development in post-independent Kenya. As a historian noted:

Airlift beneficiaries returned with skills in various domains and used the acquired competencies to drive economic activities. This influx of skilled human capital triggered a notable surge in production, thereby catalysing Kenya's post-independence economic growth and overall development.

It is evident from the data that many beneficiaries stressed the role of infrastructure development in spurring economic growth, inspired by the robust infrastructures of the West. They also identified the importance of a diversified economic approach, considering the varied challenges faced by a newly independent nation. There was a clear push towards agriculture, but also a keen interest in promoting industrial development, adapting the strategies they learned to Kenya's unique assets (Stephens, 2013). Beyond shaping overarching economic policies, these beneficiaries were also involved in the finer details of economic planning. They championed frameworks that gave prominence to

local enterprises while also creating a welcoming atmosphere for foreign investments (Shachtman, 2009). This made Kenya's economy to register the highest growth in Africa between 1963-1983 (Iraki, 2018). In particular, the pre-independence decade (1963-1973) realised a 6.7% growth, dubbed the 'Kenyan miracle' (Bynham, 1989).

International partnerships cultivated by TMAA also brought in subtler forms of economic support, for example international development projects, grants or even preferential trade agreements. The connections made through the airlifts beneficiaries served as conduits for foreign investment and partnerships essential for economic security. One expert noted as follows:

Foreign investment is like a shot in the arm for economic development. It brings capital, technology, best practices, and access to international markets. When an economy is buoyed by robust foreign investment, it has the financial depth to withstand economic downturns, invest in defence capabilities, and sustain public services, all of which are critical to national security.

It is worth noting, however, that the geopolitical inclination of most of the beneficiaries towards Western ideals had its repercussions. While Mboya championed African socialism, aiming to mold an economic model rooted in African values and principles, his pronounced inclination towards Western concepts risked overshadowing and perhaps diluted this vision (Speich, 2009). According to one respondent,

The return of the beneficiaries of the airlifts, equipped with Western qualifications and viewpoints, raised contemplative questions about Kenya's chosen trajectory. As the airlifted students returned home, armed with Western degrees and perspectives, one couldn't help but wonder, did Kenya lose when it gained the world but suppressed part of its soul? This ideological divergence, sparked by the airlifts, became a pivotal chapter in Kenya's narrative, casting profound effects on its political and societal fabric for subsequent years.

The exposure to and subsequent acceptance of Western democratic and economic structures might have inadvertently curtailed the momentum of Mboya's call for a uniquely African socialist identity (Odari, 2011). One of the beneficiaries, Barack Obama Snr, harshly criticised Mboya's economic blueprint as outlined in SP10 of 1965. He questioned how the country was going to eradicate economic inequalities including centralisation of wealth within the Asian and European middle class, without jeopardising the gains already made but also working towards a united nation (Smith & Ressler, 2008). Hence, by sending beneficiaries abroad, TMAA did not merely invest in their individual academic achievements but also ensured the country's national security architecture within the human security

orientation, benefited from a cadre of leaders with a balanced worldview. A respondent contends that:

The core philosophy of the airlifts was clear: elevate the individual and you elevate a nation in turn. And this isn't just about formal education; it's about holistic empowerment.

The TMAA initiative, while investing in human capital for national growth, represents Kenya's foresight in recognising the symbiotic relationship between education, human capital development, and a nation's economic security. As a national security expert noted:

It's fascinating how a programme initially aimed at educating a few hundred individuals could have such a multiplicative effect, impacting facets of Kenyan society well beyond the scope of its original intent. We're talking about a real-life butterfly effect here, where educating a single individual translates into systemic changes that ripple through our entire economy and fortify our national security.

■ **Contribution to foreign policy**

The impact of TMAA on the diplomatic posture of post-independent Kenya is reflected in the country's ability to forge stronger international alliances through effective partnerships with global nations for pursuit of strategic interests. One historical expert noted as follows:

When you examine Kenya's foreign policy post-independence, you can see the footprints of the airlifts.

The leadership of the beneficiaries in Kenya's foreign policy posture is characterised by major accomplishments. For instance, Prof. George Saitoti chaired the joint board of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund on Africa and served as President of the Africa, Caribbean, and Pacific/European Union (ACP/EU) group that negotiated the Lomé III agreement of 1985 on development partnership. The role of Prof. Reuben Olembo as a member of the African delegation to the 1972 Stockholm Conference led to the creation of UNEP and the subsequent establishment of its headquarters in Nairobi. He later on joined UNEP in 1974 as a senior programmes officer, rising to the position of Deputy Director, playing key roles in strengthening a number of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAS) such as the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Flora and Fauna (CITES), serving as its interim Secretary-General between 1998 to 1999. As a member of the International Genetics Federation, he also had solid contributions to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), and the FAO International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. He oversaw the development of the World Conservation Strategy,

The World Soils Policy, the Tropical Forest Action Plan of 1985, and the Microbial Resource Centers. Prof. Olembo was honored by Purdue University, Indiana USA with a Distinguished Alumni Award for Agriculture. He was also a Rockefeller Foundation Fellow. On the same note, Amb. Philip Gichuru Gitonga served as Kenya's envoy to India, Sri Lanka, West Germany and Japan. Dr. Zachary Onyonka and Wilfred Ndolo Ayah also served in the Kenya's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Washington Jalang'o Okumu, is recognised for his international mediation role in convincing the Zulu leader, Mangosuthu Buthelezi, to forge for a united South Africa instead of pursuing an independent Zulu nation during South Africa's democratic elections in 1994. In 2004, Wangari Maathia became the first African woman to be awarded the globally coveted Nobel Peace Prize for her contribution to sustainable development, democracy and peace. Eight years later, the African Union (AU) adopted a resolution to jointly commemorate the Africa Environment Day and Wangari Maathai Day in recognition of her efforts in promoting environmental conservation and sustainable development in Africa. Amb. Pamela Odede Mboya served as Kenya's representative to the UN Habitat while Hon. Simon Thuo Kairo became Kenya's first Ambassador to China. To date, China remains a key development partner of Kenya. Prof. Mirriam rose to be the Director of the United Nations Population Fund Country Support Team (UNFPA/CST) for East and Central Africa and Anglophone West Africa, the World Health Organisation (WHO) Representative, and Chief of Mission in Ethiopia, and Chief of Health and Nutrition in UNICEF, Ethiopia. She won the Queen Elizabeth II Gold Medal for outstanding contributions to international public health and supporting the health needs of disadvantaged people and the first Hideyo Noguchi Africa Prize by the Japanese Government in the medical services category. Amb. Michael George Okeyo served in Kenya's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, heading the Middle East Division. From 1974-1991, he served as a counselor and a first secretary of Kenya's Permanent Mission to the UN, rising to the position of Permanent Representative in 1988.

TMAA positioned Kenya as a focal point of East-West engagements. During the Cold War, the West saw Kenya as a reliable partner to initiatives like the airlifts. In the volatile geopolitical landscape of the time, the nations one chose to partner with bore immense significance, conveying ideological alignments and strategic intentions (Cullen, 2018). Kenya's decision to send its beneficiaries to the West could therefore be seen as an assertion of its diplomatic priorities. It showcased the nation's inclination to engage more extensively with Western powers, hinting at its openness to collaborate on other fronts, including trade, defense, and cultural exchanges. Moreover, this alignment had tangible benefits. The burgeoning relationship, facilitated by the TMAA initiative, opened doors for Kenya in terms of foreign aid, trade agreements, and international support in global fora (Nyaondo, 2013). These connections were not only about power dynamics, but also about

creating a platform for Kenya to share its narrative, perspectives, and aspirations on the world stage. One beneficiary recounts:

The TMAA experience was akin to planting seeds of diplomacy in fertile minds. It underscored the notion that when nations collaborate, societies progress. It demonstrated the importance of international collaboration. I believe it paved the way for Kenya to be more open and collaborative in its foreign policy. It showed us that global partnerships can lead to national progress.

The evidence indicate that the beneficiaries who returned to Kenya after their education in the West often served as informal diplomats, bridging the cultural and ideological gaps between Kenya and their Western counterparts (Stephens, 2013), particularly in their various international roles. Following Dr. Ngendo Mwangi's achievements as the first African student at Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York City and founding member of Smiths African Students Association, members of the Black Students Alliance at Smith College established the Mwangi Cultural Center in her honor for her dedication and service to Kenya. Their international experiences and connections played a role in ensuring that Kenya's diplomatic efforts were rooted in mutual understanding and shared objectives.

The findings indicate that the soft power implications of TMAA did not end with the alumni who became informal ambassadors of the West. Equally, notable political figures like Jaramogi Oginga Odinga, while borrowing from the initiative of Tom Mboya, realised the importance of international collaboration and were prompted to explore alternative diplomatic ties with the East. Odinga's pursuits signalled a deliberate move to diversify Kenya's global networks, seeking to counterbalance Western influence and ensure that Kenya did not embrace a one-sided ideology. This was an essential aspect that signaled that Kenya was a sovereign state focused on becoming a proactive player in global politics.

Discussion

The findings underscore the precision with which a loosely crafted pre-independence national security strategy played a major role in the successful implementation of a carefully crafted post-independent strategy. The role of TMAA beneficiaries, enriched by global educational standards yet tethered to their Kenyan roots, in actualisation of the SP10 of 1965, cannot be overstated. They occupied influential leadership positions upon their return and this gave them a unique vantage point from where they could compare international methodologies with Kenya's ground realities. This empowered them to craft policies that were progressive and yet contextually appropriate, aligning with the broader narrative of foreign policy, political and economic security as significant dimensions of national security. The findings underscore the fact that national security is not just about military logistics or geopolitical maneuverings; it revolves

around developing a powerful human capital that would guarantee a resilient nation (Pan, 2011).

The educated minds influenced key sectors and indirectly fortified Kenya's internal strength and stability. By focusing on human capital development through the TMAA initiative, Kenya demonstrated the interlinkage between education, between education, leadership, and the broader vision of national security in safeguarding and advancing national interest. This strategy, while rooted in the chaos theory, introduced small changes at the birth of Kenya as a nation through the education of a select few but which led to ramifications that not only contributed to tremendous economic growth (dubbed the Kenyan miracle) and political stability but also benefited the entire nation as a whole (Ogot, 2020). Hence, the butterfly effect.

The question of whether a National Security Strategy (NSS) must be written has been a point of contention in the realm of security policy. While a formal document can offer explicit guidelines and serve as a historical record for institutional knowledge, the Kenyan experience under the guidance of Thomas Joseph Mboya suggests that NSS need not be pegged on or delayed by formalities. Rather, strategy can effectively exist through informed practices and collective wisdom, even as the formalities get worked through. Historical evidence shows that diverse, unwritten strategies have been pivotal in securing states amid chaos. This illustrates the fluid and dynamic nature of security strategies that are tailored to a nation's specific needs and insights (Mwagiru, 2019). While the VUCA environment on the eve of Kenya's independence underscores the difficulties of crafting one such document to secure the nation, it can be argued, therefore, that the essence of Mboya's SP10 of 1965 was to document the implementation aspect of TMAA's vision six years post its operationalisation. This enabled the beneficiaries to settle quickly in their leadership roles upon return with impactful results on national security.

Mboya's strategic use of TMAA underscores how educational initiatives can extend their influence well beyond the sphere of academia to impact politics, diplomacy, and economic progress. Concentrating on the advancement of human potential, Mboya crafted a NSS that, while not codified, was integrally linked to the safeguarding of Kenya's national interests. This strategy, driven by an understanding of domestic and global dynamics, provided the versatility needed to adapt to the VUCA international landscape. This case highlights that the essence of strategic direction is the informed leadership and decisive actions of those at the helm. It demonstrates the adaptability required to address global shifts and threats, and provides the agility for a rapid and effective response. Mboya's role as a political figure illustrates that the most impactful national security strategies are not developed in formal environments but are initiated and actualised by those

leaders skilled at strategically navigating the VUCA course of their nations, amidst the complexities of international relations.

Conclusion

The TMAA initiative is therefore crucial in understanding the critical role of insightful leadership in shaping and fortifying a nation's security and resilience. The success of the TMAA reveals that effective national security strategies depend on implementation by policymakers. Significantly, it highlights the importance of educational programmes in building a secure state, underlining the role of education in developing proficient and globally acclaimed leaders for governance and policy-making. The contributions of the initiative during Kenya's post-independence period firmly established education as a strategic element of national security. TMAA safeguarded political security by promoting political awareness, fostering a sense of civic responsibility, and nurturing leadership qualities that have ensured the sustainability of multiparty democracy in Kenya amidst pitfalls. The correlation between national security and education showcased by TMAA reinforces the value of investing in human capital. The scholarship programme has proven that comprehensive education is vital for maintaining a nation's stability and sovereignty, as exemplified by the role TMAA graduates played in shaping Kenya's early governance. Given these insights, incorporating a global educational empowerment agenda is crucial for national security strategy development process.

Recommendations

To maximize the strategic benefits of educational programmes for national progress, the study proposes several actionable recommendations:

- i Establishment of Tom Mboya Airlift Museum and Library: The Ministry of Gender, Sports, Culture and Social Services to develop a museum and library to house and document the contribution of TMAA Initiative to Kenya's national security architecture while promoting TMAA scholarship, as well as the achievements of TMAA beneficiaries nationally, regionally and globally.
- ii Fostering global educational alliances for national security strategy development process: Kenya, through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Ministry of Education should consider actively developing diplomatic relationships to promote international student exchanges, enhancing educational ties and global insights. The nation should adopt a forward-looking and responsive policy to identify and address educational challenges, forming strategic alliances while safeguarding national interests.
- iii Alignment of scholarship programmes with national goals: The Kenyan government should ensure that foreign scholarship programmes are

consistent with national objectives, carefully evaluating the potential impacts on the country's human capital and international stance.

- iv Historically guided evaluation of scholarship programmes: The National Security Advisor should leverage the lessons from historical initiatives like TMAA to shape a robust scholarship strategy that is both informed by the past and tailored for future success.
- v Assessment of political implications of scholarships: It is crucial to evaluate the political ramifications of scholarships and their role in public diplomacy, ensuring that students maintain a strong national identity while absorbing global ideologies.
- vi Strategic management of brain drain: The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection should strategise to reverse brain drain by attracting skilled citizens in the diaspora back to Kenya and strategically placing returning scholars in roles that utilise their global expertise for national development.

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